

Femininity and Chastity

What is femininity and how does it relate to consecrated chastity? The answer to this difficult question must be situated in the two thousand year historical struggle of philosophers and theologians to understand three kinds of identity: personal identity, human identity, and engendered identity. I apologize in advance for my presentation which will try to survey this historical range of two millennium in fifteen minutes and lead up to my own four sentence proposals as well! Please take a deep breath and join me in this great adventure! [As the presentation progresses I will put up overhead summaries to help guide us along. They will have more information than I will give in this initial presentation, but which could be considered during the discussions if you would like to.]

For Christian philosophers identity always involves **relation** of some kind. **Personal identity** involves relation to God, **human identity** involves relation with other forms of life, and **sex and gender identity** involves relations between women and men. To develop these three kinds of identity a little further, we could say that **personal** identity includes reference to being created in the image of God as unique and unrepeatable person, with intellect and will and capacities for self-consciousness, choice, and action; **human** identity refers to being a member of the species of rational animal, with a soul and body which has consciousness, sensation, reproductive and locomotive powers. Sex and gender identity include male and female differentiation, feminine and masculine characteristics, and particular engendered acts of men and women.

Since our topic is the relation of femininity to chastity, it is important to note that what it means to be feminine or masculine has some relevance to all three levels of identity: personal,

human, and engendered. Thus a feminine expression of the vocation to consecrated celibacy- which is a personal call from God and an abundant gift of grace to a particular woman- will also have relevance to all three kinds of identity.

Our attempt to consider how femininity relates to consecrated chastity will draw upon the work of three great Christian philosophers: Hildegard of Bingen, Blessed Edith Stein, and Pope John Paul II. All three of these philosophers consider femininity within the total Christian mystery of Creation, Fall, and Redemption.¹

I

Hildegard of Bingen, a Benedictine Abbess who lived between 1098 and 1179 described femininity in the context of engendered human identity. She considered its particular relation to the elemental structure of the female body, and she explored its effects in human character as it manifested itself both in sacramental marriage and in consecrated celibacy.²

For Hildegard the human person is a unity of soul and body.³ In Hildegard's theory there is an equal dignity of all human beings- as a soul-body unity- which begins at their creation and is completed at their resurrection.⁴ The union of soul and body also has different consequences for women and men because their embodied nature is sexually differentiated as female and as male. Hildegard explored the grounds for this difference, by drawing upon a medieval science of elements and humours.

It is here that her theory becomes somewhat controversial as she charted the intricate relations between the character traits, muscular structure, blood type, skin colour, biological fertility and character.⁵ We could say today that **what** Hildegard was trying to do was right, that

is, analyzing women and men by considering the intricate relation between soul, mind, and body, but that the details of her analysis were limited by her dependence on a primitive, and at times inaccurate, medieval science.

Authentic femininity was associated with a balanced personality, while its extreme form of effeminateness was associated with weakness. She described a feminine quality as working in a man like air moderates fire, it created a sensible understanding. It also supports a capacity for friendship between a man and a woman, who are able to look at one other straight in the eye rather than with arrow-like glances that possess or dominate. Authentic masculinity was also associated with balance and moderation, efficiency, and exactness, while its extreme form tended towards violence in human interactions.

Hildegard thought that each woman and each man had some portion of both masculine and feminine qualities. The ideal type of person had an authentic balance of the quality of the opposite sex. In addition, she suggested that women and men were 'the work of each other.'⁶ Hildegard studied the effects of femininity and masculinity in both chaste and unchaste relations, and she concluded that the same balanced nature made a person both a good celibate and a good married person.

II

Blessed Edith Stein, was born into a Jewish family in 1892. She became a Carmelite nun, Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, and her life was taken in Auschwitz concentration camp in 1942. Before her entrance into the Carmel of Cologne, in Germany, Blessed Edith lectured widely about masculine and feminine identity while she was teaching in a Dominican College for

Girls. She had immersed herself in the study of St. Thomas Aquinas to complement her doctoral study on the nature of empathy according to the phenomenological method of Edmund Husserl.

Phenomenology reflects on the contents of consciousness to reach a philosophical intuition about the essence of something. Blessed Edith Stein was the first philosopher to use this method to try to grasp essential aspects of woman's identity by reflecting on woman experience of herself. In her lectures on women, she developed an extensive philosophy of gender and its relation to Christian vocation by posing numerous questions about how female and male engendered identity is experienced differently by men and women in their conscious lives.⁷

Blessed Edith Stein particularly emphasized sex and gender differentiation in the experience of human consciousness in both its fallen and its redeemed states. Like Hildegard, she emphasized that human identity was a lived-body-soul-unity; and she elaborated in detail the different complex structures of a woman and of a man which flowed from having this unified soul body identity.⁸ While both were persons of equal dignity as being created in the image of God, each gender had a more natural relation to certain characteristics because of a particular embodied nature. Woman had a natural access to a feminine identity because of her embodiment as female, while man had a natural access to a masculine identity because of his embodiment as male.

Edith Stein drew out further implications of complement masculine and feminine characteristics in ways that some critics suggest may be too stereotyped. While the contemporary reader may sometimes disagree with particular details of her conclusions, it must be acknowledged that what Blessed Edith was trying to do was extremely important for the history of Catholic philosophy. She delved deeply into the delicate area of how the female body affects

women's consciousness and how the male body effects a man's consciousness, at the same time she also opened up the whole question of divine call of a man or a woman to a particular vocation. Thus her probing of the implications of being engendered reached from the depths of our bio-chemical somatic structure to the heights of our personal and intimate relation with God who knew us before we were ever conceived.

Let us briefly consider a few of her conclusions here. Blessed Edith thought that a woman tends by nature to receive values in the world inwardly through her emotions, is strongly affected by the lived experience of her body, judges intellectually the value of a thing or a person as a whole, and thus uses her will to make personal and holistic choices. This feminine ethos, as she calls it, "embraces what is living, personal, and whole."⁹ A man, in contrast, tends by nature to receive values in the world more through his intellect, is not very affected by the lived experience of his body, judges the value of things or persons in the world in a compartmentalized way, and uses his will to make more specialized choices.¹⁰ The corporeal structure of the female body naturally orients a woman towards a maternal kind of support for the growth of new life first within the self and then outside of the self; while the corporeal structure of the male body naturally orients a man towards a paternal manner of reproducing by detachment from self.

Stein argues that even though the female body has a natural access to femininity and the male body has a natural access to masculinity, that women have a duty to become educated in masculine values and men have a duty to become educated in feminine values. Blessed Edith suggests that Jesus Christ perfectly developed his natural masculine and learned feminine characteristics.¹¹ She also notes with approval the strongly developed feminine qualities in male

saints and the strongly developed masculine qualities in female saints. Conversely, a woman who neglects to develop her natural feminine identity or a man who neglects to develop his natural masculine identity is unlikely to develop a mature spiritual identity.

The redemptive mission of women is situated in Stein's thought in the context of a vivid portrayal of fallen human nature, and the particular tendencies of a fallen **feminine** nature which tends towards possession, greed, extreme curiosity, and slavish dependence, rather than towards healthy spousal and maternal concern for the value of the whole person, and the "right development of the beings surrounding her."¹² Women are also called to engage in redemptive work in a world shaped as well by a fallen masculine nature which tends towards domination over others, enslavement to work, too much abstraction, and atrophy of humanity instead of mature paternal detachment, dedication, objectivity, and specialization. Thus she concludes that the ethos of woman has the potential to transform a world permeated with masculine professions by bringing a feminine orientation towards the persons in it.¹³

The vow of chastity adds a further dimension to the discovery and development of a woman's feminine vocation. Blessed Edith reflects often on the call to a vocation of virginity as offering "the most intimate, personal communion with the Saviour, the development of all faculties in His service, and spiritual maternity- i.e., the winning of souls and their formation for God."¹⁴ She suggests that a woman's deepest feminine longing is to give herself in love to another.¹⁵ When God elicits this gift from a woman in the call to a life of consecrated celibacy, if a woman responds to this call with the total gift of herself, then her deepest longing may be fulfilled.¹⁶

For Stein, the fact that God calls a person to a particular vocation is a sign that the soul itself has a unique identity as a woman's soul or a man's soul from all eternity. This means that the body is not the only source of differentiation of man and woman. The radical significance of God's foreknowledge of Mary's place in world history is highlighted as the woman from all time destined to be the person chosen by God for the miracle of the Incarnation.¹⁷ In a similar way, each woman's soul has been known by God in its gender identity from the beginning of time.

The fulfilment of woman's feminine identity through a spousal gift of self in a call to consecrated chastity may be completed through her spiritual maternity which will try to safeguard and foster the new life which is given to her by this union of One Spirit with Jesus Christ. Mary at Cana is invoked as the prototype of the spiritually fertile woman, who surveys everything, discovers what is lacking, and finds the ways and means to procure the remedy. Spiritual maternity demands woman's ingenuity in many and varied ways.

III

John Paul II has written extensively on femininity and masculinity from the perspective of phenomenology, personalist philosophy, and a spirituality with Marian and Carmelite foundations.¹⁸ He opens up the ethical and personal range of human acts in his writings which consider the respective responsibilities of women and men, the call of everyone to become acting persons, building communities of persons by intersubjective participation based on a love for the common good of all women, men, and children.

The Pope says that women and men are two ways of being a person as a lived soul-body unity. The bodily somatic, emotive and psychic aspects of human consciousness, as well as the intellectual and volitional aspects of human identity are integrated into masculine and feminine ways of being persons. An acting person achieves personal integration and mature participation in community through authentic living of what he calls the 'personalistic commandment' to always treat another person as a someone worthy of love. Therefore, women and men love authentically in **some similar and other different** ways.¹⁹ He concludes that men and women become authentic persons in complementary ways.²⁰

In contrast to Hildegard and Blessed Edith Stein, John Paul II tends to limit the use of 'feminine' to just women's way of being a person and 'masculine' to just men's way of being a person.²¹ Many of the particular characteristics identified as feminine (e.g. the effect of stirring emotions on the psyche and balance of character) or masculine (tendency towards abstraction and strength) by the two previous Christian philosophers would be considered simply as human or personal characteristics by the Pope. However, he believes that some feminine characteristics are associated with women in the same two specific ways we noted in Blessed Edith Stein: first, in woman's way of receiving new life, and second, in woman's way of fostering the growth and development of new life in the self and in others. In fact, his recent development of a theory of the genius of woman is built upon these two natural feminine characteristics.²²

Mary, the Mother of God, provides the prime model for both the spousal and the maternal forms of femininity. As John Paul summarizes it, Mary "signifies the fullness of the perfection of 'what is characteristic of woman,' of 'what is feminine.'"²³ In his Apostolic Letter

on Women, we read that" ...Mary exercises her free will and thus fully shares with her personal and feminine "I" in the event of the Incarnation."²⁴ Note that it is Mary's action, her way of doing something that is feminine here. Her intellect and will are given over to God, in a free, total, act of self-gift, during which Mary first conceives in her mind, and then in her body the Word made flesh.²⁵ Mary's motherhood is personal before it is biological.

Mary is also the first person to respond to the call to consecrated virginity; hers is a feminine response to the gift-presence of Jesus Christ, Eternal Word made man.²⁶ Our call as consecrated religious is to follow in Mary's footsteps by responding to the love of God with the gift of our own love.²⁷ Women living the consecrated vow of chastity provide a prime model for the spousal dimension of religious vocation, and John Paul II in *Mulieris Dignitatem*, that men religious and priests live this spousal bond analogously.²⁸

In the second aspect of femininity, its maternal form, Mary, as the woman referred to in *Revelations* 12:4, stands before the serpent who wishes to devour her child, and she protects and fosters the development of the new life which has been entrusted to her.²⁹ Here we discover woman's special destiny to do battle with evil. John Paul II emphasizes that God entrusts human beings to women in a special way - "precisely by reason of their femininity-" and that this entrusting determines women's vocation in a particular way.³⁰ Women work to bring to fulfilment the life that is given to another. Women's way of accomplishing this mission in union with Jesus Christ releases various forms of women's genius.³¹

It is important to note that femininity is thought of as something, that although present at our creation, whose value and meaning is more fully discovered later in life. Thus femininity is not completely given in the body or in the soul, but it is ultimately revealed through acts and

relationship. The Pope often says that the value of femininity must be **found, discovered, and realized**. It depends upon how fully a woman can open up the depths of her being to another person and to the Divine Persons. It is here that the mysterious fruitfulness of ascetical practice of the vow of chastity begins to flourish with its infusion of the grace which opens the depths of a woman's heart to the lived mystery of dying and rising with Christ. John Paul II concludes his reflections on the *Dignity and Vocation of Women* by reminding us that: "In the Spirit of Christ... women can discover the **entire meaning of their femininity** and thus be disposed to making a 'sincere gift of self' to others, thereby finding themselves."³²

For Pope John Paul II we become fulfilled as persons by our acts. This is how we find ourselves, by exercising our intellect and will, in mature acts of self-gift to others to build up the common good. Thus you become a person when you act personally, and you become feminine when you act like a woman. This call to fulfilment as a woman is a great adventure of the spiritual life. In this way, John Paul II emphasizes that the true meaning of femininity is not something passive, but rather found in the highest form of action. It is woman's way of acting in the world through a sincere gift of self for others.

IV

We can now return to the promise I made at the beginning of this presentation- to make a four sentence proposal about femininity and chastity, drawing upon the work of the three giants who have proceeded us. What have we learned from Hildegard, Blessed Edith, and Pope John Paul II? What can we take away for our own personal use?

1) From Hildegard we learned that there is an identity which is deeper than our bio-chemical identity but which depends upon it for its expression; and we must never separate any constitution of the self from the Word made flesh in each of us.

2) From Blessed Edith Stein we learned that there is a supremacy of the Spirit in our unique personal identity which is suffused with a relation with God before we were even created as a bio-chemical female human being; and we must pay attention to this spiritual identity and its image and likeness to God.

3) From Pope John Paul II we learned that identity resides in becoming an acting person, in woman's doing something in a particular way and in being fulfilled in act; and thus, as consecrated religious we fulfil ourselves as women when we fulfil our vocation which is to live the life of the perfection of charity, acting the transfigured Christ life as a woman.

4) In professing our vow of chastity we said to Jesus Christ, I love you, I solemnly promise to love you in all things, to love exclusively You, to love You as inclusive of all humanity.

In this context of the call of our vocation as consecrated women we can say that femininity is our birthright. It may either be sold for a bowl of pottage or be claimed and shared with others. *Romans 8* reminds each us that we are predestined, known, called, justified, and glorified as a unique and unrepeatable woman. Thus femininity is both a cause and a result of a woman's vocation to be spouse of the Lord.³³ Femininity is also a means and an end of a woman's vocation to spiritual maternity and it serves as an eschatological sign of the life of the Church, Bride of the Spirit, at the end of time in glory.³⁴

May we pray together in thanksgiving for our vocation and in hope of its fruition: "Come Lord Jesus." With Your grace and Your love I hope to perfectly fulfill my vocation through living my vow of chastity acting in charity until I become what I have vowed. Come Lord Jesus and release the genius of our femininity in spiritual maternity through the particular charism of our Institute.

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National Assembly on the Evangelical Counsel of Chastity
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REFERENCES

1. Without wanting to suggest a direct link among them, I would like to indicate areas of accord particularly with respect to sex and gender differentiation and the call to Christian holiness. In my description I will use the word 'gender' to include conscious and biological sexual differentiation because of its root meaning which is associated with the words 'gens', 'engender', and 'generation'.
2. Hildegard developed her philosophy of femininity in the context of Benedictine monastic life, with its agrarian roots, hospitality to pilgrims and the sick, intellectual heritage, frequent interaction of men and women, and contemplative prayer. For a more detailed description of her theory see, Prudence Allen, RSM, "Hildegard of Bingen's Philosophy of Sex Identity," *Thought*, vol 64, no. 254 (September 1989): 231-241 and Barbara Newman, *Sister of Wisdom: St. Hildegard's Theology of the Feminine* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987).
3. The soul, she said, wander[s] everywhere through the body, "like a caterpillar spinning silk;" it acts in the human being in the same way as "a bee forms honey in its comb;" it flows "through the body like sap through a tree." Hildegard of Bingen, *Liber compositae Medicinae* also known as *Causa et Curae* and translated into German as *Heilkunde* (Salzburg: Otto Muller Verlag, 1957), 126. Hildegard of Bingen, *Liber Divinorum Operum*, also known as *De Operatione Dei* and translated into English as *Book of Divine Works* (Santa Fe: Bear and Co., 1987), and *Scivias*, trans. Mother Columbia Hart and Jane Bishop (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), Book One, Vision four: 25, 123.
4. This complete union of soul and body is important for Christian philosophy because it explains the need for the resurrection of the body. At the same time, it also rejects the unisex model which rejects the importance of the body for personal identity and often supports reincarnation. See Hildegard, *Scivias*, Book One, Vision Four, 16, 119-20. For a detailed study of the history of the debate between Platonic based theories which support belief in reincarnation and Aristotelian based theories which support belief in resurrection of the body see, Sister Prudence Allen, RSM *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution (750BC-1250AD)* (Grand Rapids, Michigan and Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 1997).
5. Hildegard of Bingen, *Hielkunde*, 135-148. Woman, she thought, had more of the middle elements of air and water, and thus more of the humours, while man had more of the extreme elements of fire and earth. In addition, in her consideration of woman she added medical observations of the quality of menstruation and diseases after menopause, while for men she added character traits of children. Although Hildegard recognized the presence of an ovum in women, she followed the Aristotelian tradition, as interpreted by Galen, which claimed that women's seed was infertile and functioned primarily as a secretion. The male seed alone was fertile and led to the particular character of the child conceived.

6. From the moment of Creation, "[m]an and woman are in this way so involved with each other that one of them is the work of the other [opus alterum per alterum]. Without woman, man could not be called man; without man, woman could not be named woman." Hildegard, *Divine Works*, Part One, Vision Four: 100-123.
7. These lectures are published in Edith Stein, *Woman* (Washington DC: ISC Publications, 1996). For a more detailed consideration of her philosophical method see, Prudence Allen, "Edith Stein: The Human Person and Male and Female," chapter 12 in *Images of the Human: The Philosophy of the Human Person in a Religious Context*, eds. Leonard A. Kennedy, et. al. (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1995): 397-432.
8. For a more detailed comparison of these two theorists see Prudence Allen, "Sex and gender differentiation in Hildegard of Bingen and Edith Stein," *Communio* 20 (Summer 1993): 389-414.
9. Stein, "The Ethos of Women's Professions," *Woman*, 45.
10. Stein, "Spirituality of Christian Woman," *Woman*, 94-97.
11. Stein says in "Vocations of Man and Woman," "Whether man or woman, whether consecrated or not, each one is called to the imitation of Christ. The further the individual continues on this path, the more Christ-like he will become. Christ embodies the ideal of human perfection: in Him all bias and defects are removed, and the masculine and feminine virtues are united and their weaknesses redeemed; therefore, His true followers will be progressively exalted over their natural limitations. That is why we see in holy men a womanly tenderness and a truly maternal solicitude for the souls entrusted to them while in holy women there is manly boldness, proficiency, and determination." *Woman*, 84.
12. Stein, "Vocations of Man and Woman," *Woman*, 78.
13. Stein describes it this way in "Ethos of Women's Professions," "Thus the participation of women in the most diverse professional disciplines could be a blessing for the entire society, private or public, precisely if the specifically feminine ethos would be preserved", *Woman*, 50-51. Stein also suggests often that woman's particular part, similar to Mary, is to engage in the battle with evil. It is important to note that Stein distinguishes between professions and vocations, so that while a woman may practice a masculine profession, she is not called to the male vocation of Sacramental priesthood.
14. Stein, "Spirituality of Christian Woman," *Woman*, 101.
15. Stein reflects in "Ethos of Women's Professions" that "the motive, principle, and end of the religious life is to make an absolute gift of self to God in self-forgetting love, to end one's own life in order to make room for God's life....", *Woman*, 53.
16. Stein, "Ethos of Women's Professions," *Woman*, 53. See also Stein, "Problems of Women's Education," where she says "To be the bride of Christ means to belong to the Lord: it means

to put the love of Christ before all things, not merely by theoretical conviction but in the tug of the heart and in practical life. To become so one must be detached from all creatures, free of a fixation on oneself and on others; and that is the deepest, most spiritual meaning of purity.", *Woman*, 203.

17. Stein, "Vocations of Man and Woman," "...He bound Himself so intimately to one woman as to no other on earth: He formed her so closely after His own image as no other human being before or after; He gave her a place in the Church for all eternity such as has been given to no other human being. And just so, He has called women in all times to the most intimate union with Him: they are to be emissaries of His love, proclaimers of His will to kings and popes, and forerunners of His Kingdom in the hearts of men. To be the Spouse of Christ is the most sublime vocation which has been given, and whoever sees this way open before her will year for no other way.", *Woman*, 84.

18. The most important sources for his personalist philosophy of sex identity is found in the following works, listed in chronological order: Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981), originally 1960; *The Acting Person* (Dordrecht: Holland/Boston: 1979), originally 1969); Pope John Paul II, *Original Unity of Man and Woman: Catechesis on the Book of Genesis* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1981); Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* (On the Dignity and Vocation of Women), (Boston: St. Paul Media, 1988); and *The Genius of Women* (A compilation of statements from 1995) (Washington DC: United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, 1997). To situate John Paul II's personalist philosophy in the history of the philosophy of sex identity see, Prudence Allen, "Integral Sex Complementarity and the Theology of Communion," *Communio* vol. xvii, no. 4 (Winter 1990: 523-544.

19. This commandment of love is called by him the "personalistic norm," and it becomes the measure of all ethical action. See, Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 41 and 66-67.

20. In his *Letter to Women*, he expresses it this way: "Woman complements man, just as man complements woman: men and women are complementary. Womanhood expresses the 'human' just as much as manhood does, but in a different and complementary way." #7. See *The Genius of Women*, 52.

21. This may be a linguistic rather than a substantial difference, but the result is that for John Paul II there is a singular line of development which includes the nexus {male, masculine, man} and {female, feminine, woman} while for Hildegard and Blessed Edith Stein there is a triangular configuration which includes the nexus {male, natural masculine and educated feminine, man} and the nexus {female, natural feminine and educated masculine, woman}. Evidence that there is not a substantial difference may be found in the following passage from *Mulieris Dignitatem*, "The man - even with all his sharing of parenthood- always remains 'outside' the process of pregnancy and the baby's birth; in many ways he has to learn his own 'fatherhood' from the mother.," #18.

22. See *Mulieris Dignitatem*, "This unique contact with the new human being developing within her gives rise to an attitude towards human beings- not only towards her own child, but every human being- which profoundly marks the woman's personality. It is commonly thought that women are more capable than men of paying attention to another person." #18 In *Love and Responsibility*, Karol Wojtyla suggests that even women who have never had the experience of generating a biological child has the same orientation towards people because her body prepares her to receive new life through its monthly cycles. "...the woman's sexual rhythm prepares her every month to conceive a child and adjusts her whole organism to this very purpose. This is the origin of that feeling for the child which sexology calls the maternal instinct...", 280. See also "Letter to Women," in *The Genius of Women*, "Progress usually tends to be measured according to the criteria of science and technology... Much more important is the social and ethical dimension, which deals with human relations and spiritual values. In this area, which often develops in an inconspicuous way beginning with daily relationships between people, especially within the family, society certainly owes much to the *"genius of women."* #9, 53.

23. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, #5.

24. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, #4.

25. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, #13.

26. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, #20.

27. John Paul II suggests in *Mulieris Dignitatem*, that to follow in Mary's footsteps in the feminine spousal dimension is to discover the special genius of our relation with Jesus, the Word made flesh, and the feminine maternal dimension by responding to this gift of Divine love with fruitful love which issues forth in new life for others. Woman is the one "who receives love in order to love in return..." #29.

28. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, "One cannot correctly understand virginity- a woman's consecration in virginity- without referring to spousal love. It is through this kind of love that a person becomes a gift for the other. Moreover, a man's consecration in priestly celibacy or in the religious state is to be understood analogously.", #20.

29. Pope John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, #30.

30. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, "The moral and spiritual strength of a woman is joined to her awareness that God entrusts the human being to her in a special way. Of course God entrusts every human being to each and every other human being. But this entrusting concerns women in a special way--- precisely by reason of their femininity- and this in a particular way determines their vocation... A woman is strong because of her awareness of this entrusting, strong because of the fact that God 'entrusts the human being to her,' always and in every way..." #30.

31. See Pope John Paul II, *The Genius of Women*, (Washington DC: NCCB, 1997) for a compilation of his statements in 1995 on the topic. He envisages the flourishing of this genius of women as capable of transforming alienating structures of the world of business, of technology which tend to destroy the dignity of the human person.

32. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, #31.

33. Women begin with femininity but also discover and fulfil it, when they learn how to give themselves to another with increasing depth of freedom, with more total singularity of will, with more joyful submission of intellect, with an even stronger undivided heart, and with their female body through which they can act in increasing conformity to the crucified and resurrected body of Christ. Then femininity becomes a cause and a result of the spousal bond as consecrated celibates- one Spirit with Jesus Christ the Lord.

34. As consecrated celibates, women can give their mind totally to the Lord's affairs, in service, in being sent to serve others according to the charism of our institutes. Femininity is the means because it is the way women do things, the way women enter into dialogue, the way women love, the way women foster growth in others. It is also the end of the consecrated woman's vocation, because through it she comes to fulfilment by pouring forth the fruits of the love she has been given, by giving herself totally to others in imitation of Jesus Christ.

John Paul II (Karol Wojtyla)

The Acting Person and Sex Differentiation:
Theological Aspects

A WOMAN	A PERSON	A MAN
	Adam- solitary- created in image and likeness of God as soul/body unity with intellect and will and in union with God	
Femininity in Eve is the female way of being a bodily incarnation of the image of God	Adam- falls asleep and wakes up male 'is' and female 'issah'	Masculinity in Adam is the male way of being a bodily incarnation of the image of God
The mystery of the femininity of the woman is fulfilled through her generative maternity	Man and woman are complementary ways of being a person- called into a communion of persons in likeness to the Holy Trinity	The mystery of the masculinity of the man is fulfilled through is generative paternity
After the fall, the woman blames the serpent, feels shame, and hides herself. Her unfulfilled desire is for her husband and she brings forth new life in pain.	In the fall the union between God and humanity, and man and woman, and human beings and the world are ruptured.	After the fall, the man blames the woman, feels shame, and hides himself. He tends to dominate the woman and works with toil.
Mary, the new Eve, conceives in the mind with her gift of intellect and will and then in her body thus fulfilling her feminine maternity as the Mother of God.	The Incarnation of the Redeemer Jesus Christ (True God and True Man) takes place through cooperation of the woman Mary with the action of the Holy Spirit according to the plan of the Eternal Father	St. Joseph fulfills his masculine paternity by adopting Jesus Christ as his son.
During Jesus' public life many women respond to Jesus in a feminine way by caring for him as a person	Jesus and Mary live a life of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience	During Jesus' public life the male apostles are called to go forth to preach the word of God and to offer the sacraments
A woman religious offers the prime model of the spousal vocation to consecrated chastity	The Spousal bond of consecrated chastity is a response of love to the gift of God's love	Male religious and Priestly celibacy are understood analogously to women religious
A consecrated woman's femininity is fulfilled by her act of total self-gift, with undivided will, and complete affections to the Lord	This self-gift engages the intellect, will, emotions and total person in acts	The Sacramental Priest is fulfilled by his act of total self-gift for the Church, his Bride in communion with Christ the Bridegroom.
A consecrated woman's femininity is fulfilled by the genius of her acts of spiritual maternity which comes from her union with the Lord	This self-gift is fertile when blessed by the Lord in spiritual generation	The Sacramental Priest's masculinity is fulfilled by the genius of his act of spiritual paternity by which he sows his seed in the Church community - with the Lord

PRIMARY PATERNITY OF GOD**PARTICIPATED GENERATION OF A MAN**

God, the Father is Unbegotten	A human father is generated
Eternally begetting the Word Temporally begetting the Word made flesh with the Holy Spirit and the help of Mary	Temporally begetting a child with the help of a woman
First Principle and Origin (as Pure Spirit) of Son and Holy Spirit	First principle (as material origin) of conception by fertilization
Ontological Act of Love- Operation and Identity are the same	Dependent acts of love- operation and identity are different
Active self-giving love to another	Active self giving love to another
Active love which receives another	Active love which receives another
Created man in His Image as Pure Spirit- with Divine Intellect and Divine Will- and living in a material world	A father's identity can continue to be developed through acts of intellect and will expressed in the material world The same for fathers by adoption The same for fathers as Priests
Created male and female (and their generative issue) in the Image and Likeness of the Holy Trinity as a Communion of Divine Persons	A father's identity can continue to be developed through acts of love which build up the human community of persons ever more in the image and likeness of God
Jesus Christ, the Perfect Image of God, the Father revealed the glory of Divine Paternity	A man can participate in the glory of fatherhood to the extent that he shares in acts of paternal love

Hildegard's Four Types of Men

	Type I	Type II	Type III	Type IV
blood	fiery	fiery and airy	airy and black bile	weak in all respects
colour of skin	red hue	mixed red and white hue	sombre	unclean and pale
fertility	very	moderate	partial	infertile
character	hearty and hale	balanced	very dangerous, no moderation	weak, effeminate
children	tend to be unrestrained, course-mannered	balanced, happy, well-mannered	mean or evil children	no children
attitude towards women	treat women like sex objects	honourable and fruitful relations with women	physically abusive of and hateful towards women	indifferent towards women

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